

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Establishing an Artist's Studio/Dwelling in an Existing Building

November 2001

The purpose of this Client Assistance Memo (CAM) is to define the Land Use and Building Code requirements that are generally applicable to the rehabilitation of an existing building for an artist's studio/dwelling in Seattle. Each building is different and consequently the code requirements will vary. **Information in this publication is not applicable to new construction.**

It is important to know all applicable zoning, fire and life safety regulations before investing in a space. This CAM provides only a brief explanation of the requirements for an artist studio/dwelling. To obtain more information, contact the DPD Applicant Services Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., (206) 684-8850.

DEFINITIONS

Artist—a person who is regularly engaged in the visual, performing or creative arts.

Artist's Studio/Dwelling—a combination working studio and dwelling unit for artists. An artist's dwelling unit consists of a room or suite of rooms on one or more floors designed for and occupied by not more than one family and including adequate working space reserved for the artist or artists residing therein.

LAND USE CODE REQUIREMENTS

An artist/studio dwelling is permitted outright as a residential use in mixed use structures or as an Administrative Conditional Use in single-purpose

residential structures in NC1, NC2, NC3, C1, & C2 zones. Within industrial zones IB, IC, IG1 & 2, the Land Use Code permits artists studio/dwellings as an Administrative Conditional Use in buildings existing as of Oct. 5, 1987.

An Administrative Conditional Use permit is a discretionary decision made by the Director of DPD and requires a notice of application and a public comment period. The Director's decision is appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

For information regarding fees and procedures, contact the DPD Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., (206) 684-8467. Building permit fees, based on construction costs of the work needed to fulfill occupancy requirements, will also apply (see the next section of this CAM). Information and materials required for filing an application are available at the DPD Applicant Services Center.

When permitted only as a conditional use in commercial zones, artist studio/dwellings are subject to criteria listed in Section 23.47.006 of the Seattle Municipal Code. Conditional use criteria for artist studio/dwellings within industrial zones are as follows:

1. The use is not located in areas where environmental or safety problems may exist.
2. The use is not located on freight lines or next to freeway or highway access, or where it would restrict or disrupt industrial activity.
3. The nature of the artist's work shall be such that there is a genuine need for the space.
4. The use shall not be located where it may restrict or disrupt industrial activity.

Establishment of an artist studio/dwelling in industrial zones also requires the proponent to complete and record a covenant and equitable servitude acknowledging the industrial character of the surrounding neighborhood. This is intended to ensure that artist/residents understand that neighboring industrial activity may not necessarily be compatible with residential use.

www.seattle.gov/dpd



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A professional artist may maintain a studio as accessory to his or her dwelling in a residential zone if the home occupation standards of Section 23.44.050 are met. A “hobby” artist may maintain a studio if by nature it qualifies as incidental and accessory to the residential use.

BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS

NOTE: The following discussion only applies to projects that are not considered substantial alterations of existing buildings per the Seattle Building Code Section 3403.11. Any major remodeling will likely require more Building Code requirements (see CAM 314).

General Information

Under the Seattle Building Code, each building alteration project is considered individually. The particular improvements that DPD will require for an artist's studio/dwelling will depend on the unique features of the building, the extent of work being done, and the nature of both the new and former uses of the building. In some cases, it may be necessary to have a structural engineer assess the condition of the building. The final permit or Certificate of Occupancy may include restrictions, such as limitations on use of the building for assembly purposes or storage of flammable liquids.

Because the requirements vary, it is advisable to schedule a meeting with DPD representatives before beginning an artist's studio/dwelling project. At the meeting, you can decide the extent of work that will be necessary to comply with the construction codes.

The following paragraphs set forth some general rules, but keep in mind that DPD may require additional or different improvements.

Substantial rehabilitation is defined as including one or more of the following:

1. extensive structural repair;
2. remodeling to substantially extend the physical or economic life of the building or significant portion of the building;
3. changing the occupancy to one that is more hazardous than the existing occupancy;
4. reoccupying a building that has been vacant for more than 24 months; or
5. significantly increasing the occupant load of an unreinforced masonry building.

If your building will require substantial rehabilitation, call DPD's Applicant Services Center at (206) 684-8850 for information about additional requirements.

NOTE: Usually, a single-family dwelling can be occupied as an artist's studio/dwelling without making any special changes. The following provisions apply primarily to other buildings.

These rules assume that the artist's studio/dwelling will not include gallery space or other areas open to the public. Additional review will be required for portions of buildings that include these types of areas.

Structural Requirements

Portions of buildings in which artists' studio/dwellings will be located must meet certain structural design requirements:

- The building floors must be capable of supporting a minimum live load of 40 psf (pounds per square foot). Most commercial buildings are designed for greater loads, so this requirement usually will not present a problem.
- All loose appendages and other material must be secured to the exterior of the building or be removed.
- It may be necessary to tie exterior masonry walls to floors and roofs, depending on the condition of the building and the extent of rehabilitation or repair proposed. This will be determined by the building official after an evaluation of the work proposed.
- It may be necessary to remove or back brace unreinforced masonry parapets, depending on their condition. In general, parapets must be able to resist a lateral force equal to their weight. DPD may require repair of parapets, rather than removal, if the parapets are part of the building's fire and life safety system or if they are part of a historical landmark structure.

Elevator Requirements

Passenger elevators may be used to serve studio/dwellings, usually without modifications. Freight elevators may serve studio/dwellings if they conform to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Standard A17.1, Safety Code for Elevators and Escalators. The standard lists the following requirements for freight elevators which are used to serve passengers:

- The elevator must not be accessible to the public. For example, it may be operated by a key that is

available only to occupants of the building, or it may be located in a locked vestibule.

- The elevator must be rated for passenger load.
- Elevator cars must be fully enclosed. Cars may have removable panels, but the panels must be locked or otherwise secured in place.
- Manually-operated bi-parting vertically sliding doors are prohibited.

Heating Requirements

Every studio/dwelling shall be provided with a heating system capable of maintaining a room temperature of 65° F.

Kitchen Facility Requirements

Every studio/dwelling shall either have its own kitchen or have access to a kitchen that is provided with a kitchen sink with hot and cold running water, a cooking appliance, refrigeration facilities, and a countertop working space.

Bathroom Facility Requirements

At least one toilet, lavatory, and bathtub or shower must be provided for every eight occupants.

Guardrail Requirements

A guardrail will be required whenever a walking surface, such as a stairway or floor, is located more than 30 inches above adjacent walking surfaces. The guardrail must be at least 36 inches high if within the unit or 42 inches high elsewhere.

Required Access For Persons With Disabilities

Federal, state and local laws currently require accessibility for people with disabilities for new construction and alterations, and additions to existing buildings.

Chapter 11 of the Washington State Building Code does not require that alterations to existing buildings be accessible unless they are "substantial alterations" (see separate definition for this purpose).

The Federal Fair Housing Act (FFHA) and the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) are federal laws which may require artist's studio/dwellings to be accessible. DPD does not enforce FFHA and ADA regulations.

Fire and Life Safety Requirements

Provisions designed to protect the building and its occupants in case of fire are summarized below:

One-Hour Construction. As explained in the following pages, one-hour construction will be required for many of the walls and ceilings in the studio dwelling. One-hour construction most commonly means 2" x 4" wood or metal studs with 5/8" Type X gypsum wall-board on both sides.

Exits. In most circumstances, studio/dwellings must be served by two means of egress to a public street or alley. The exits must be unobstructed all the way to the street or alley.

Corridors. Corridor walls and ceilings must be of at least one-hour fire resistive construction. Existing lath and plaster in good condition may also be acceptable.

Doors opening into the corridor must have a 20-minute fire rating. They must be self-closing and self-latching. Doors which are solid wood, at least 1-3/8 inch thick may be accepted in lieu of tested and labelled doors. Transoms must be covered on both sides with 5/8" Type X gypsum wallboard.

Drawings in **Figures 2-6** of this CAM show acceptable methods for modifying existing doors as an alternative to 20-minute corridor doors. Alterations may be made to either side of the door. All doors must be uniformly close-fitting and may not sag.

Doors to individual studio/dwellings must have a dead bolt or dead latch with at least a 1/2-inch throw that penetrates the striker at least 1/4 inch. They must also have a visitor observation port installed between 54 and 66 inches from the floor. **Figure 7** shows acceptable construction methods.

Stairways. Interior stairways must be enclosed in one-hour construction in buildings of four and fewer stories. Existing wood lath and plaster in good condition may be accepted in lieu of one-hour fire-resistive construction.

Doors opening into one-hour stairway enclosures must be one-hour self-closing and self-latching assemblies. A solid wood door at least 1-3/4 inches thick may be accepted in lieu of a tested and labelled door.

Figures 8 and 9 show acceptable methods of modifying existing doors as an alternative to labelled doors.

In buildings more than four stories in height, the stairway enclosures must be of two-hour construction with one and one-half hour self-closing or automatic-closing doors.

Landings between flights of stairs and all corridors, passageways or public rooms necessary for continuous exit to the exterior of the building shall be included in the stair enclosure.

Stairways are generally required to have at least six feet eight inches of headroom. Ladders are allowed only within dwellings to provide access to areas of less than 200 square feet that do not contain the primary bathroom or kitchen.

Construction. Artists' studio/dwellings in buildings more than two stories in height or which have more than 3,000 square feet of floor area above the first story must be of one-hour fire resistive construction or heavy timber, if the artist's studio/dwelling is more hazardous than the existing occupancy. Examples of occupancies that are less hazardous than studio/dwellings are factories that use noncombustible materials, office buildings, and storage of combustible goods.

Studio/dwellings must be separated from each other and from the corridor by one hour construction. Partitions within a studio space may be 3/4 height partitions. See **Figure 1** for a sample floor layout.

Partitions must be constructed of materials complying with the flame-spread classifications found in Chapter 8 of the Seattle Building Code.

Some additional fire protection may be necessary if other areas of the building contain businesses that would expose the artist's studio/dwelling to a high potential hazard, such as auto repair garages, gasoline service stations, warehouses for hazardous and highly flammable materials.

Escape Windows. An escape window or exterior door must be provided for sleeping rooms below the fourth story. The net clear opening must be 5.7 square feet with a net clear height of 24 inches and width of 20 inches.

NOTE: All three net clear opening criteria must be met. Maximum finished sill height is 44 inches.

Fire Detection Systems. An approved smoke detector must be located in every bedroom or sleeping area. An additional smoke detector must be located on the ceiling between the sleeping areas and the other areas of the studio/dwelling.

In addition, at least one manual-pull station fire alarm must be provided in the corridor on each floor.

Fire Sprinkler Systems. A residential-type automatic fire sprinkler system will often be required when a non-residential building is converted to use as studio/dwellings. A sprinkler system will be required in buildings of three or more stories, in buildings with two

or more stories of residential use located above another type of use other than parking, and in buildings with five or more studio/dwellings or apartments.

Minimum Room Dimensions. Every studio/dwelling must have at least one room with not less than 120 square feet of floor area. Sleeping rooms must be at least 70 square feet in area. No room, other than a kitchen or bathroom, may be less than seven feet wide.

Most rooms must have a ceiling height of seven feet six inches. Kitchens, corridors, bathrooms, and hallways must have ceilings at least seven feet high.

ELECTRICAL CODE REQUIREMENTS

All new electrical equipment and circuits must meet the Seattle Electrical Code. All revisions to electrical circuitry require an electrical permit.

Kitchens must have at least three outlets and one supplied light fixture.

At least one supplied electric light fixture is required in each bathroom, laundry room, hallway, and flight of stairs.

Extension cords for cooking and heating are not permitted.

ENERGY CODE REQUIREMENTS

Chapter 1 of the Seattle Energy Code specifies the requirements for change of use (101.3.2.3) and for other alterations (101.3.2.4). Usually, all floors above unconditioned space and roofs must be brought up to current Energy Code standards, plus windows and exterior walls must comply with current code. Alternatives which will result in comparable energy use may be accepted if supported by calculations.

PERMITS YOU WILL NEED

Building

A building permit is usually required for artists' studio/dwellings. A permit is required to change the occupancy of an existing building—for instance to change a warehouse to a studio/dwelling—even if no remodeling work is done. If no change of occupancy is involved, a building permit will not be required for work with a value of less than \$4,000 unless the alteration will affect exiting or will create new exterior openings.

The building permit application must include at least three sets of plans showing what is intended to be built and how it will be constructed and occupied. The plans must also include a plot plan of the site. Plans must be drawn to scale on paper at least 18 X 18 inches in size.

You can obtain more information about how to apply for a building permit by calling the DPD Applicant Services Center at (206) 684-8850.

Electrical

A separate electrical permit will be required for all changes to the wiring. Additional information about electrical permits can be obtained from DPD's Over-the-Counter (OTC) permit staff at (206) 684-8464.

Elevator

A separate elevator permit is required for all new installations of elevators. Elevator permits are also required when existing elevators are altered, including modifying freight elevators for passenger use. Additional information may be obtained from DPD's Elevator Inspections section at (206) 684-8453.

Plumbing

A plumbing permit will be required for all plumbing work. Information about plumbing permits can be obtained from the DPD Applicant Services Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., (206) 684-8850.

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of DPD **Client Assistance Memos (CAMs)**, **Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Publications" and "Codes" pages of our website at **www.seattle.gov/dpd**. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this CAM, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.

Figure 1. Sample Floor Layout

This drawing shows studio/dwellings separated by one-hour walls. The corridor is also of one-hour construction.

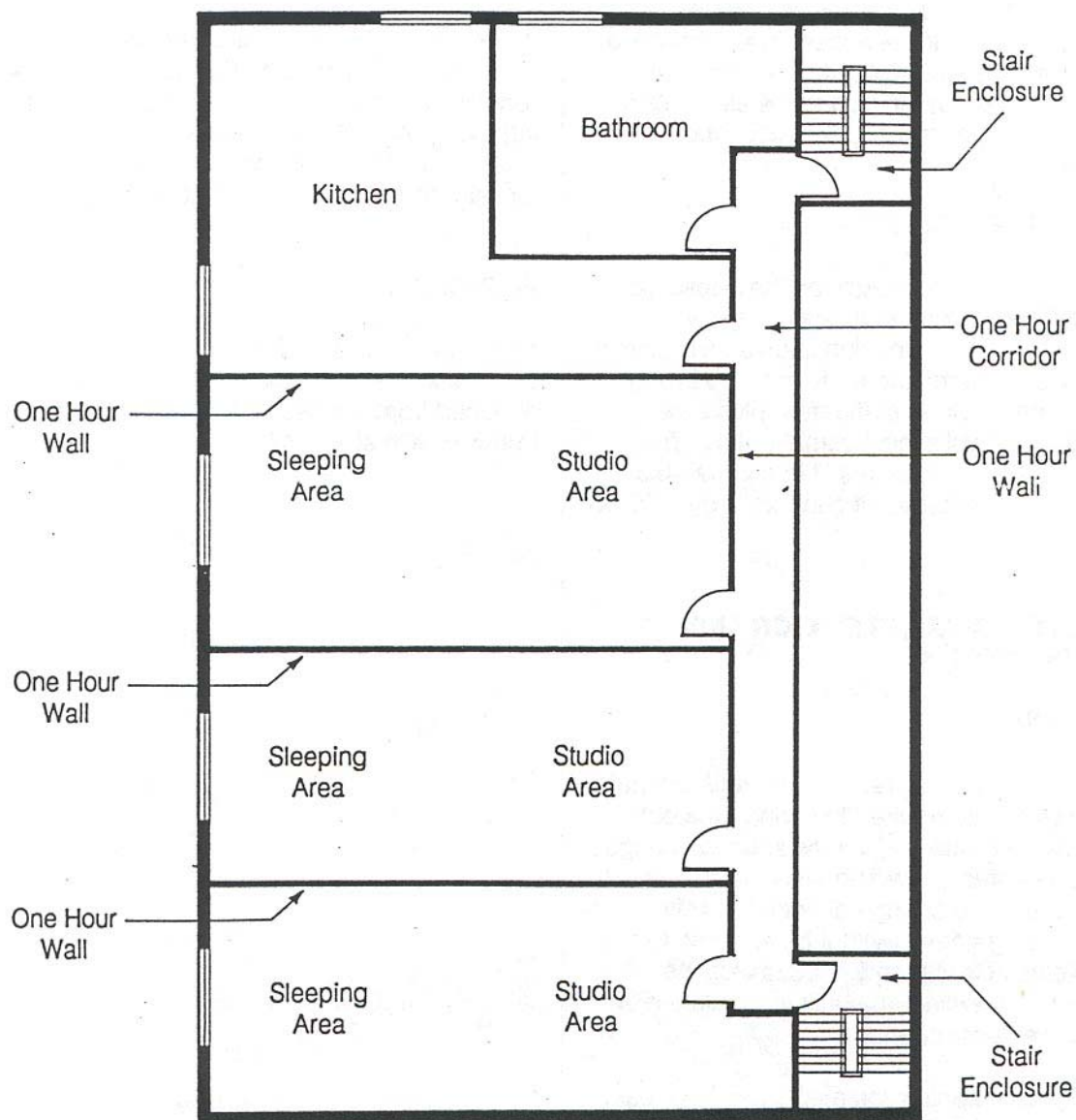


Figure 2. Acceptable Alternatives to 20-Minute Corridor Doors

Figures 2 through 6 show acceptable alternatives for 20-minutes corridor doors. This alteration may be made to either side of the door. All doors must be uniformly close-fitting, and must not sag.

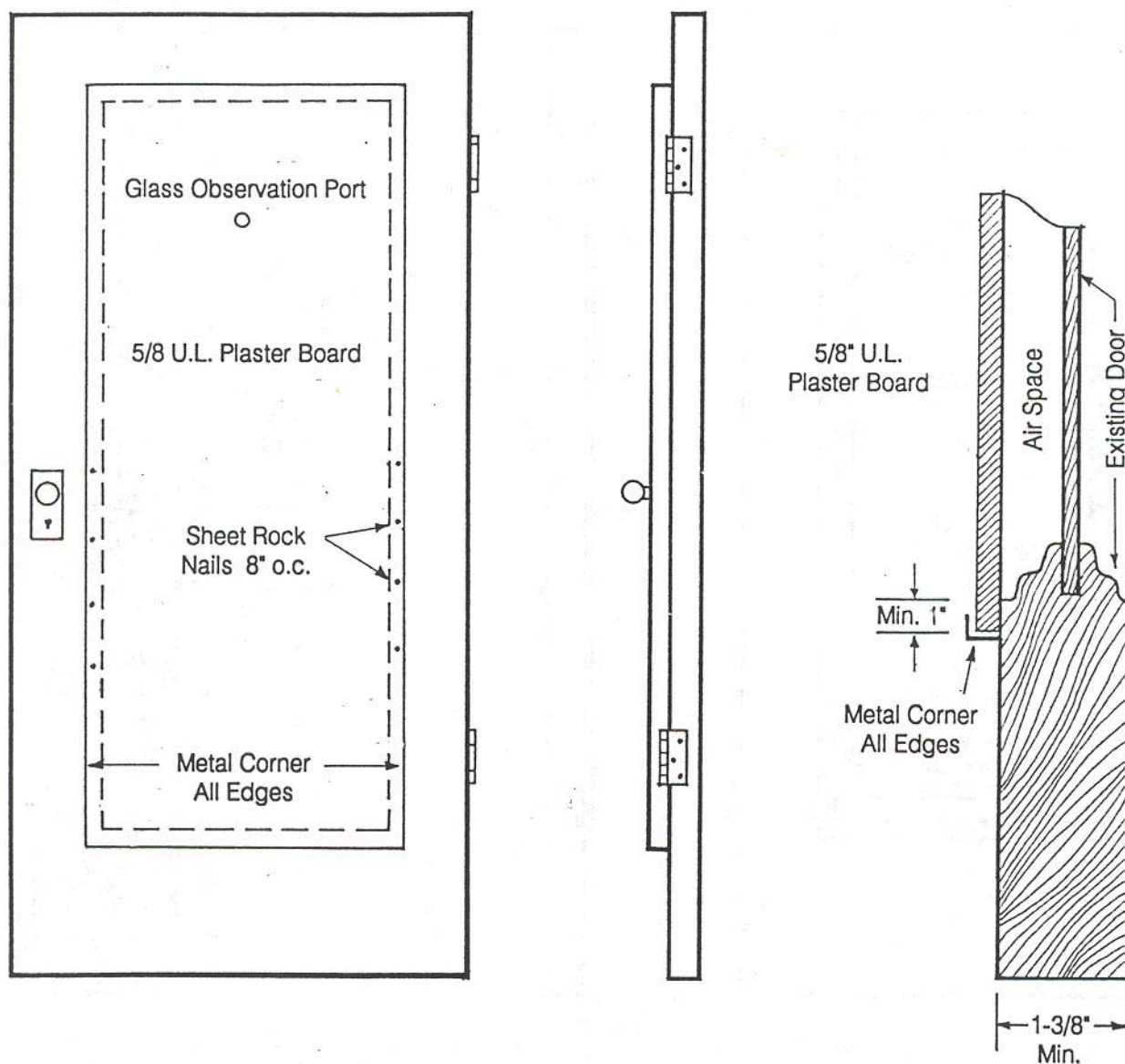


Figure 3. Acceptable Alternatives to 20-Minute Corridor Doors

Figures 2 through 6 show acceptable alternatives for 20-minutes corridor doors. This alteration may be made to either side of the door. All doors must be uniformly close-fitting, and must not sag.

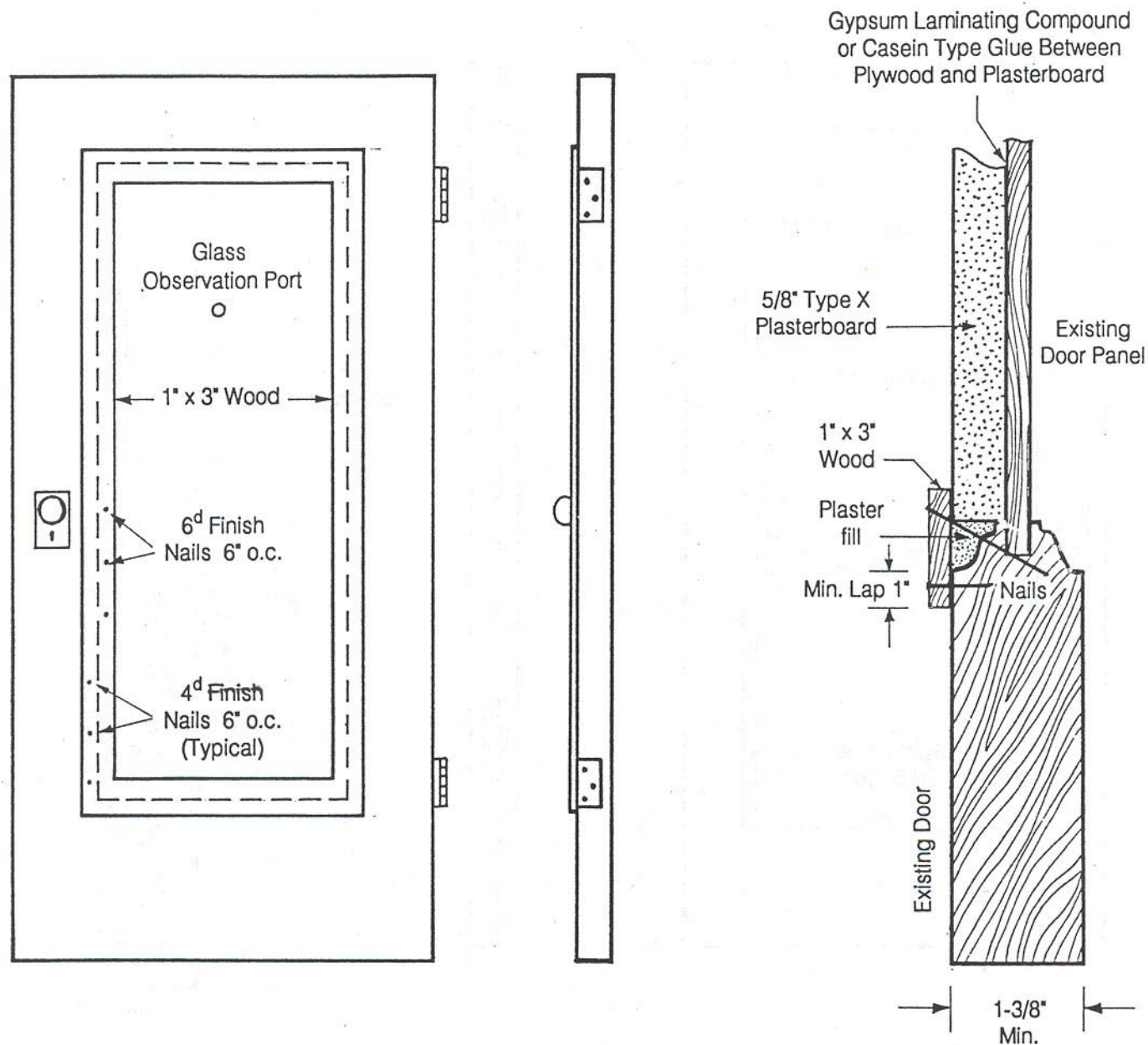


Figure 4. Acceptable Alternatives to 20-Minute Corridor Doors

Figures 2 through 6 show acceptable alternatives for 20-minutes corridor doors. This alteration may be made to either side of the door. All doors must be uniformly close-fitting, and must not sag.

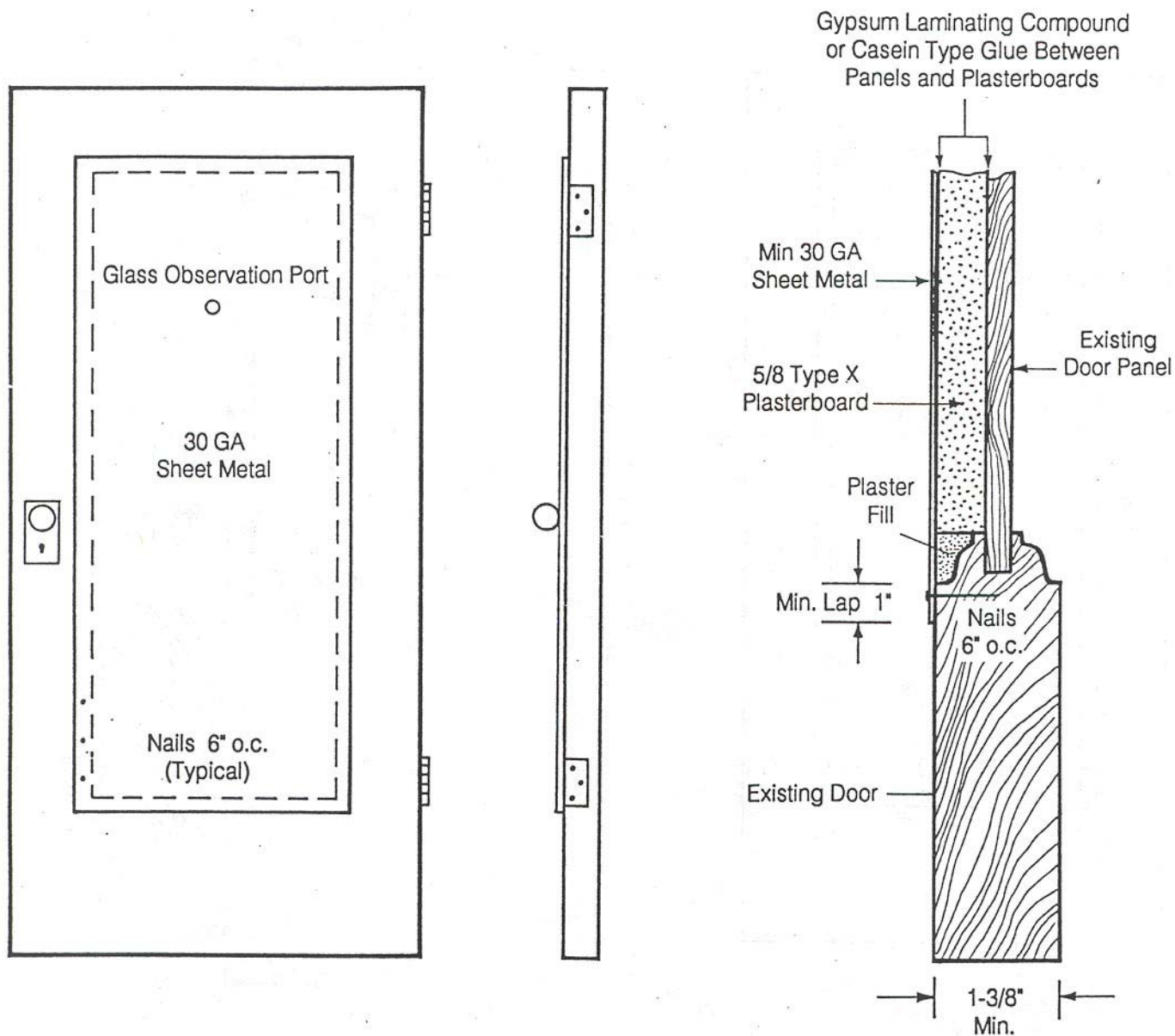


Figure 5. Acceptable Alternatives to 20-Minute Corridor Doors

Figures 2 through 6 show acceptable alternatives for 20-minutes corridor doors. This alteration may be made to either side of the door. All doors must be uniformly close-fitting, and must not sag.

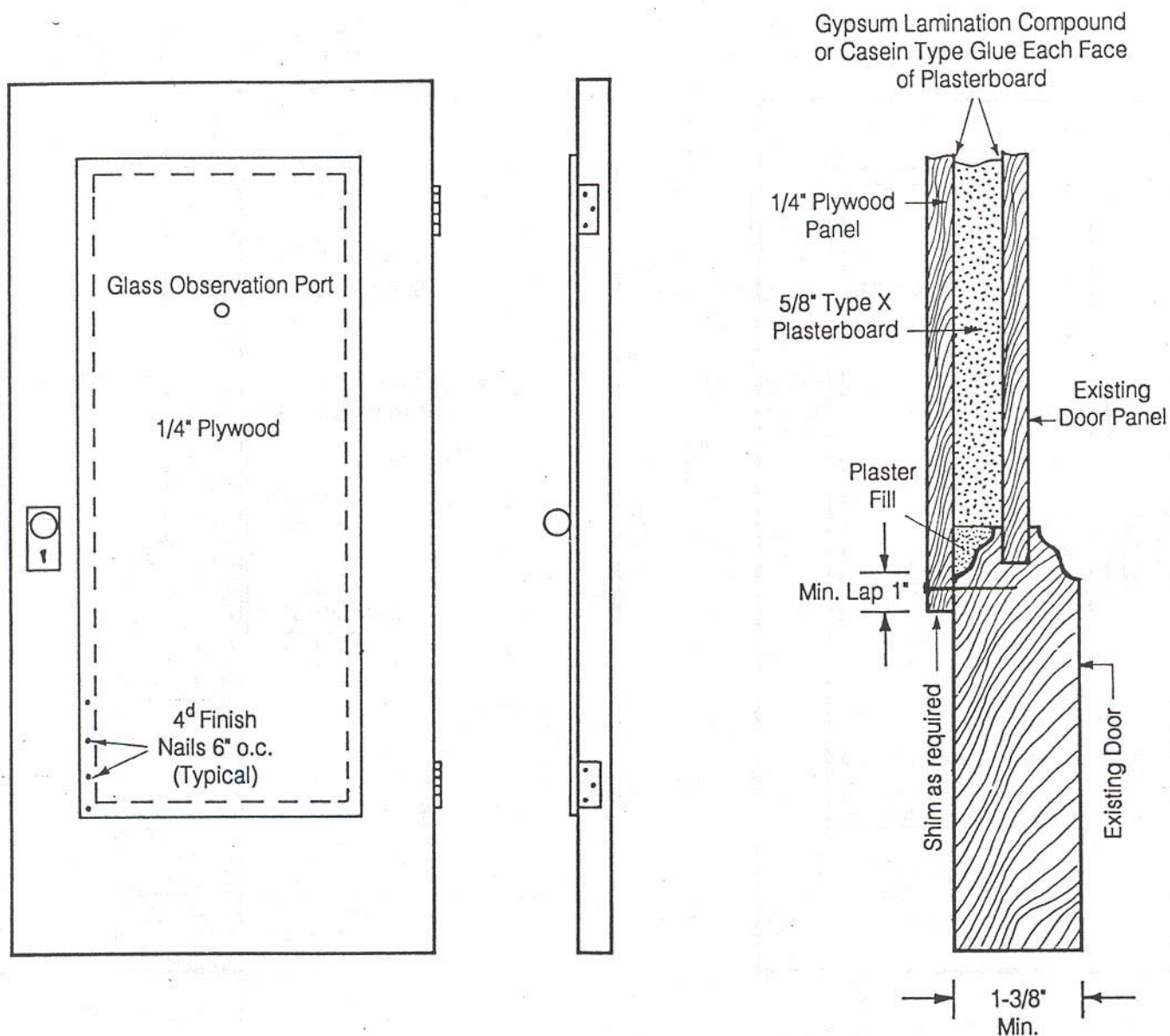


Figure 6. Acceptable Alternatives to 20-Minute Corridor Doors

Figures 2 through 6 show acceptable alternatives for 20-minutes corridor doors. This alteration may be made to either side of the door. All doors must be uniformly close-fitting, and must not sag.

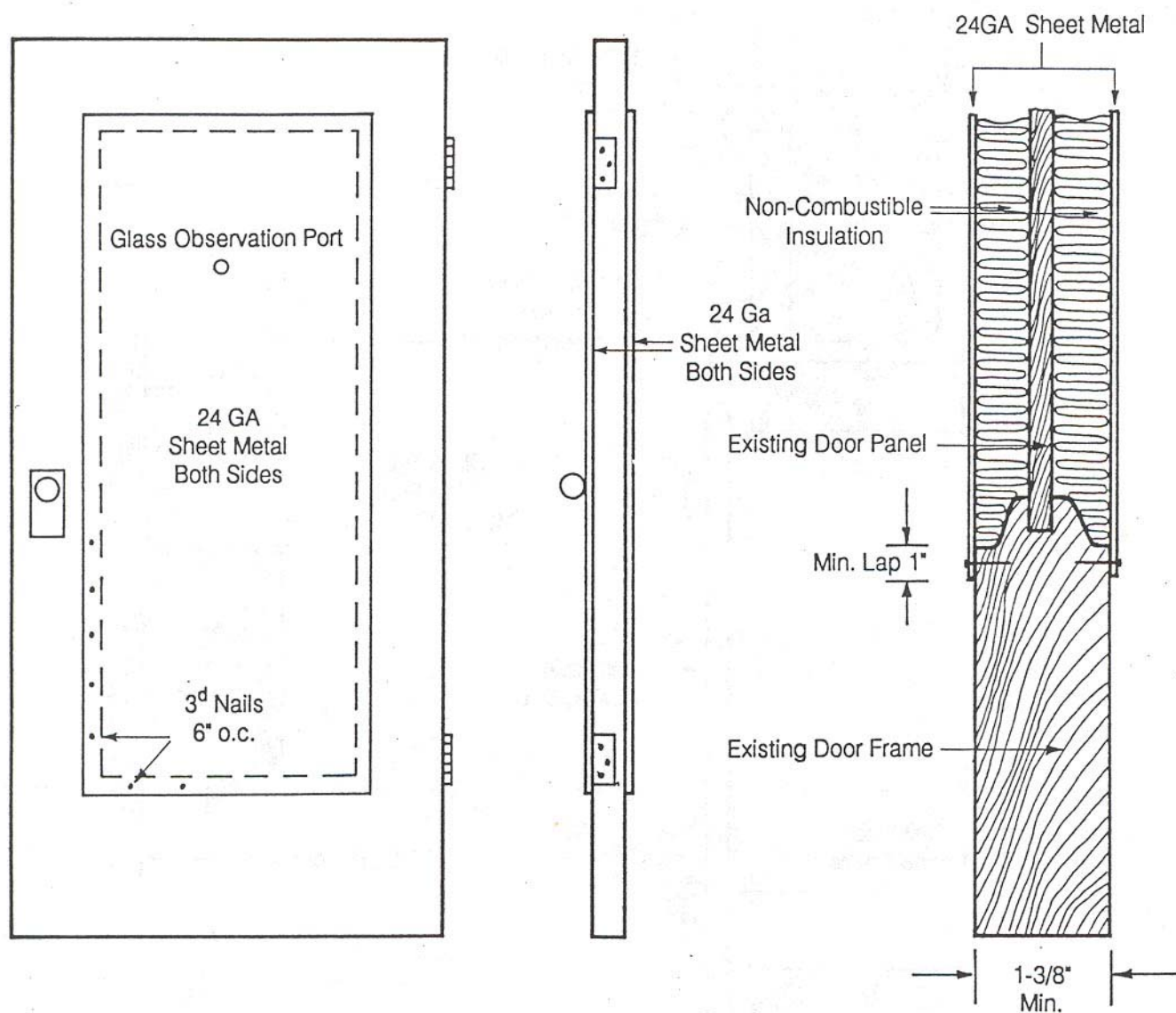


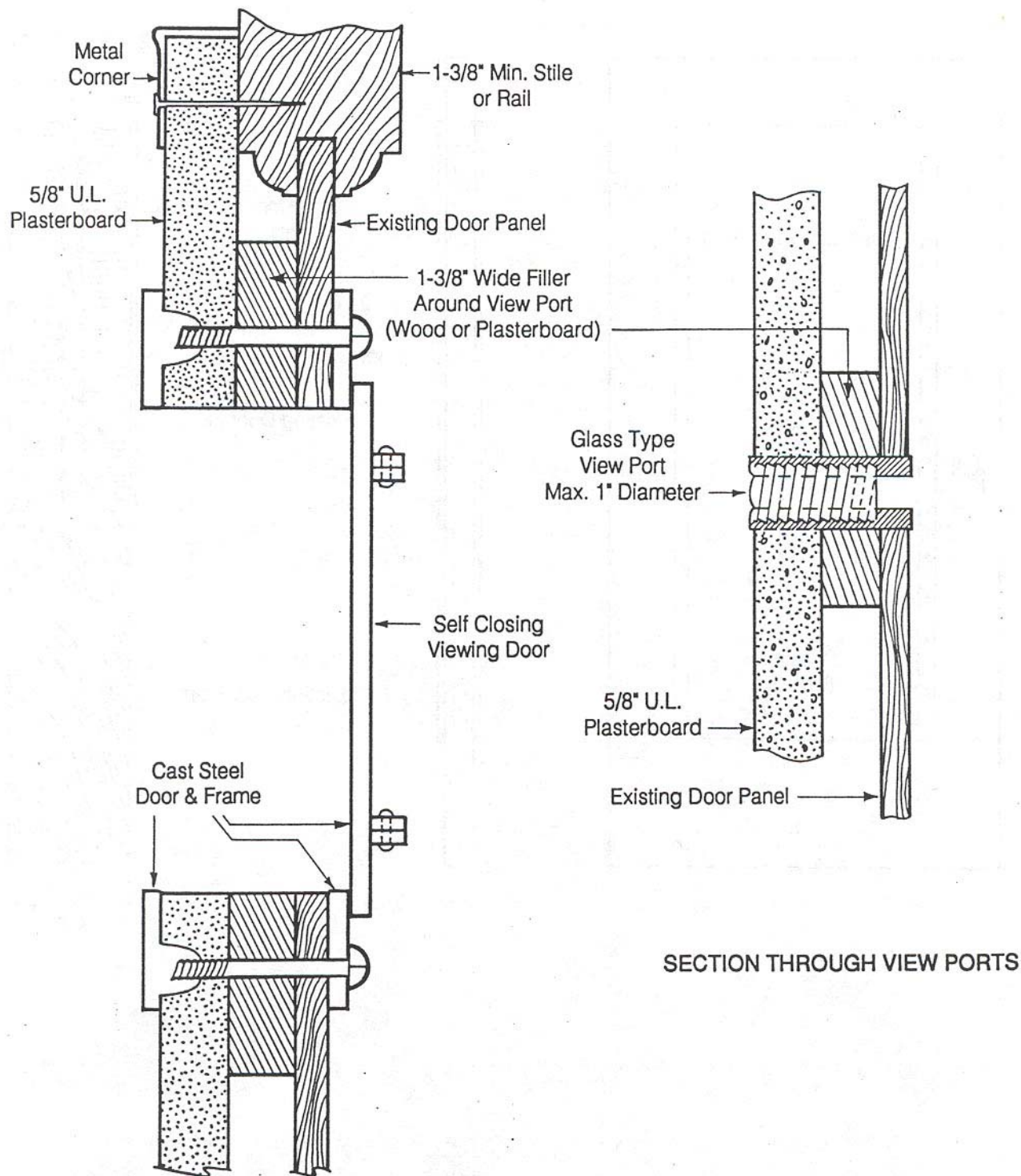
Figure 7. Acceptable Construction Methods for View Ports in Doors

Figure 8. Acceptable Alternatives to 1-Hour Stairway Doors

Figure 8 shows acceptable alternatives to one-hour stairway doors for two-, three-, and four-story buildings. Doors must be close-fitting and must not sag.

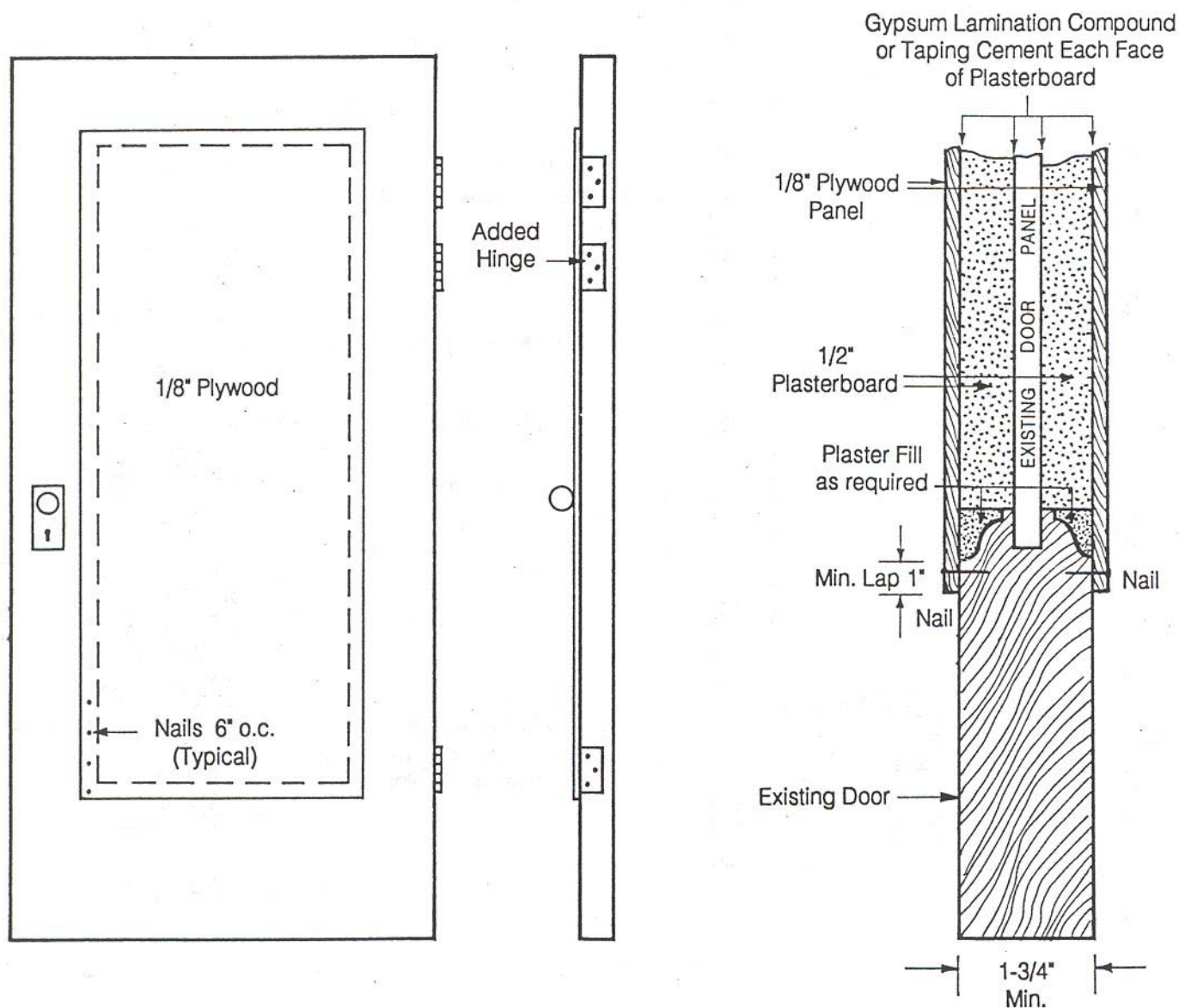


Figure 9. Acceptable Alternatives to 1-Hour Stairway Doors

Figure 9 shows an acceptable method for altering a 1-3/8 inch panel door to meet the minimum requirements for a one-hour stairway door.

